

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12 /083 W
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O P 261359Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 153
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NY PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

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CAIRO PASS USDEL

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IS, EG, XF
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION TO BEGIN PLAN NOT SERIOUS AS YET

REF: TEL AVIV 11072

1. SUMMARY: GENERALLY SPEAKING, ACTIVE OPPOSITION IN
ISRAEL TO THE BEGIN PLAN IS SO FAR RESTRICTED TO RIGHT-
WING FRINGE GROUPS. AS EXPECTED, THESE GROUPS ARE LED
BY THE COMPLETE LAND OF ISRAEL MOVEMENT, GUSH EMUNIM,
AND A HANDFUL OF LIKUD MEMBERS. DISSATISFIED VOICES
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ARE ALSO HEARD AMONG OTHER PARTIES, E.G., LABOR, AGAINST
VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE BEGIN PLAN, AND THERE IS CONSIDER-
ABLE WORRY AMID THE RANKS OF THE GOVERNMENT COALITION,
BUT WE ESTIMATE NO MORE THAN TEN TO FIFTEEN MKS WOULD
VOTE AGAINST IT. THE PRESS IS GENERALLY SUPPORTIVE, WITH THE
EXCEPTION OF ONE EDITOR OF YEDIOT AHARONOT.
END SUMMARY.

2. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD IN TEL AVIV ON DECEMBER 25, LEADERS OF THE COMPLETE LAND OF ISRAEL MOVEMENT ANNOUNCED A PUBLIC CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE PLAN, WHICH IT DESCRIBED AS A "PRESCRIPTION FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ZIONIST ENTERPRISE IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL." MK MOSHE SHAMIR TOLD THE PRESS CONFERENCE THAT THE MOVEMENT IS PLANNING MASS RALLIES. PUBLIC GATHERINGS AND DEMONSTRATIONS, SIT-INS AND HUNGER STRIKES. THE MOVEMENT ANNOUNCED THAT IT PLANS TO JOIN FORCES WITH OTHER BODIES, NOTABLY GUSH EMUNIM, AND SMALL GROUP OF IRGUN VETERANS, PROFESSORS, AND SOME MEMBERS OF THE LIKUD CALLING THEMSELVES "LIKUD MEMBERS AGAINST THE BEGIN PLAN". THESE LATTER ARE LED BY JERUSALEM COUNCILOR GERSHON SALOMON, WHO IN A LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER DESCRIBED THE PLAN AS "DISASTROUS FOR ISRAEL". ACCORDING TO SALOMON, THERE IS INCREASINGLY SHARP CRITICISM OF THE PLAN WITHIN THE LIKUD (MAINLY HERUT AND LA'AM) AND DISSATISFACTION WITH THE FAILURE TO ALLOW THE ELECTED LIKUD INSTITUTIONS TO DISCUSS THE PLAN. GUSH EMUNIM, WHICH HELD AN ACTIVIST MEETING ON SATURDAY NIGHT CONDEMNING THE PLAN (SEPTTEL) IS NOW PREPARING ANOTHER MEETING IN OFRA FOR DECEMBER 27. REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL GUSH EMUNIM GROUPS AND SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES WILL PARTICIPATE. A DEMON-

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STRATION AGAINST THE PLAN IS EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE IN YAMIT TODAY.

3. AS FOR OPPOSITION IN THE KNESSET, THE SIGNS NOW ARE THAT IT IS RESTRICTED TO A VERY SMALL NUMBER OF MKS. WE ESTIMATE THAT NOT MORE THAN THREE TO FIVE LIKUD MEMBERS WILL OPENLY OPPOSE THE BEGIN PLAN. DESPITE ITS MISGIVINGS, MOST OF THE ALIGNMENT IS EXPECTED TO SUPPORT THE PLAN (AS ONE MK PUT IT-"THEY WOULD NOT DARE VOTE AGAINST PEACE"). IN THE NRP, ONLY ONE MK, RABBI CHAIM DRUCKMAN OF GUSH EMUNIM, MAY OPPOSE IT. ANOTHER NRP HAWK, YEHUDA BEN MEIR, DESCRIBED THE PLAN AS CONTAINING GREAT RISKS, ADDING THAT THE IMPORTANT THING NOW IS TO PREVENT AN EROSION OF VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE PLAN, AS IT IS ALREADY VERY FAR-REACHING; HOWEVER, IT SEEMS TO US THAT APART FROM DRUCKMAN, THERE WILL NOT BE ANY DISSENT WITHIN THE NRP KNESSET FACTION. AS FOR THE OTHER KNESSET PARTIES, BEGIN CAN RELY ON THE SUPPORT OF ALL BUT RAKAH, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO OPPOSE THE PLAN BECAUSE "IT DISREGARDS THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE". THUS, HE COULD FACE NO MORE THAN 10 NEGATIVE VOTES IN THE KNESSET.

4. THE PRESS, WITH VARYING NUANCES, SUPPORTS THE BEGIN PLAN. THE OUTSTANDING EXCEPTION TO THIS IS YEDIOT AHARONOT EDITOR DR. HERZL ROSENBLUM, WHOSE EDITORIALS ARE EXTREMELY CRITICAL OF BEGIN AND HIS PLAN (REFTEL). IN TODAY'S EDITORIAL, HE COMPARES BEGIN WITH LENIN, BEVIN, ATTLEE AND DE GAULLE. HE DESCRIBES ISRAEL'S COMPLETE CAPITULATION AS OPPOSED TO SADAT'S TOTAL VICTORY: "HE HAS NOT YIELDED A SINGLE INCH." HE EXPRESSED DOUBTS WHETHER THOSE WHO OPPOSE ISRAEL'S TOTAL WITHDRAWAL HAVE ANY CHANCE, "SINCE THE JEWISH PEOPLE ARE WEARY," AND CONCLUDED BY NOTING "EVEN IF THEY DO HAVE A CHANCE, THE QUESTION IS--IN THE SITUATION WE ARE IN, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CAN THEY STILL PREVENT SUCH A TREATY, WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS PREPARED SO METICULOUSLY?"

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE OPPOSITION AMONG THE POLITICIANS (IN THE KNESSET AND THE PARTIES) APPEARS WEAK AND ISOLATED, IT IS TOO EARLY TO ASSESS THE REACTION AMONG THE GENERAL PUBLIC. IT IS CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT MOST OF ISRAEL SUPPORTS BEGIN'S EFFORTS AND THE COMPROMISES THEY BELIEVE HE HAS MADE. ALL PUBLIC SURVEYS WITH WHICH WE ARE FAMILIAR CONTINUE TO REFLECT A WILLINGNESS ON THE PART OF MOST ISRAELIS TO SUPPORT FAR-REACHING COMPROMISES.
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